The Catacombs of Paris: A Melodrama in Two Acts [1840]

George W.M. Reynolds
Edited by Stephen Basdeo

ARTHUR WILLIAMS

The Catacombs of Paris.

A Melodrama

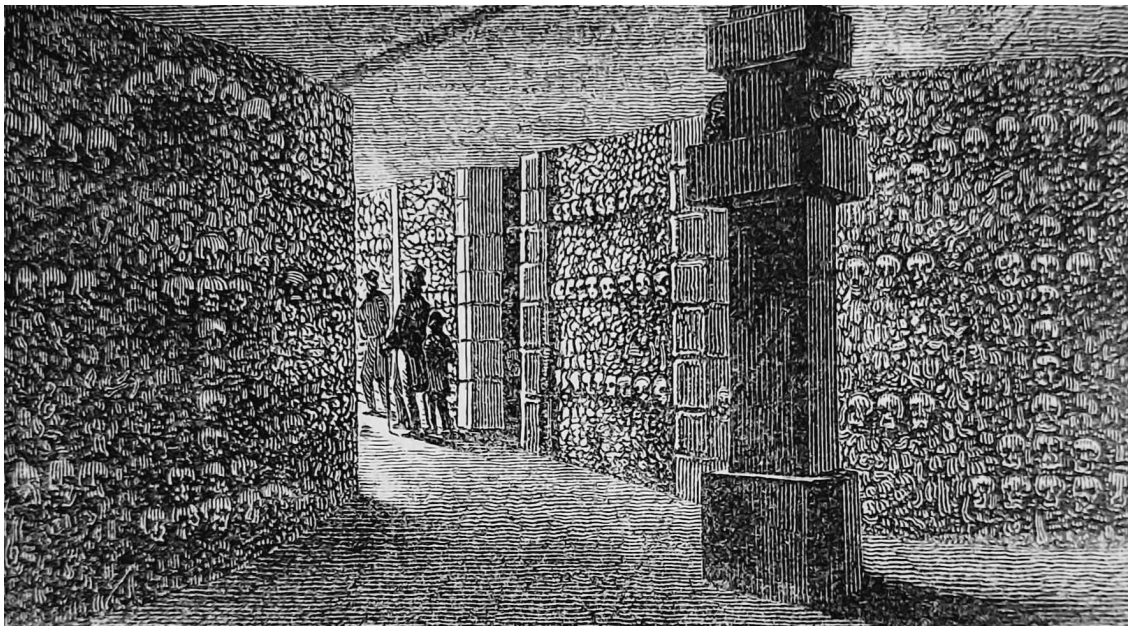
in

Two Acts.

By G. W. M. Reynolds,

Author of "Pickwick Abroad," "Alfred De Rosann," "Grace Darling," &c. &c.

[Reynolds, George W.M., *The catacombs of Paris: a melodrama in two acts*. University of Kent Special Collections, Templeman Library, PETT MSS.C.21 SPEC COLL][1]



The Catacombs of Paris. A Melodrama in Two Acts [1840][2]

By G.W.M. Reynolds,[3]

Author of *Pickwick Abroad*, *Alfred de Rosann*, *Grace Darling*, &c. &c.

[edited by Stephen Basdeo]

Dramatis Personae.

The Marquis of Florville.
Saint Aubyn.
Josephine, wife of Napoleon.
Angèle, wife of de Florville.
Annette, Angèle's Servant.
Lords and ladies, attendant upon the Empress Josephine.

--

**** Throughout the First Act, Saint Aubyn is attired as a priest. During the Second Act he is dressed as a French Nobleman of the Empire. Angèle is in mourning in the Second Act.*

**** Scene is laid in Paris, in 1805. Three months are supposed to elapse between the two acts.*

Founded upon an original tale in Part XIV [chapter LIII] of *Pickwick Abroad*.[4]

---

[1] General Note in the Templeman Library Catalogue: Ms. in one volume, bound in a paper cover. A pencilled note on the title page (possibly by Harwood Cooper?) says that the ms. is holograph. Title from original title page: 'Founded upon an original tale in Part XIV of *Pickwick abroad*.' Stamped 'Arthur Williams.' Subsequently owned by Frank Pettingell. Acquired from Mrs. Ethel Pettingell.

[2] The MS itself is not dated, but Louis James assigns a date of 1840, coinciding with the recent publication in the *Monthly Magazine* of *Pickwick Abroad; or, The Tour in France*, as well as the fact that the list of works written by Reynolds on the title page ends with *Grace Darling* (1840). See Louis James, 'Out of the Darkness: G.W.M. Reynolds's Play, The Catacombs of Paris', *G.W.M. Reynolds Society*, June 2021 (accessed 19 October 2024).

[3] Header image on this edition is taken from the relevant chapter (LIII) in Reynolds's *Pickwick Abroad; or, The Tour in France*.

[4] This statement originally appeared at the end of the third act.

Note on the Text

The MS has not yet been published and there are some minor defects in it which have compelled me to make occasional interpolations. These are highlighted in square brackets. At times in the MS, Reynolds also crossed out passages and these parts have been added to the footnotes with a strikethrough, so as to make the text more readable for modern scholars. Stage directions, following the conventions of many Victorian publishers (including Reynolds's business partner John Dicks, who published his *Dicks' Standard Plays* series), have been italicised here (when in the MS they were originally underlined. Otherwise, all of Reynolds's original capitalisation and underlining to emphasise certain words in the dialogue have been retained.

The Catacombs of Paris

Act I.

The stage represents the boudoir of the Marchioness de Florville. Entrance-door on the Right Hand. A door opening into a closet on the Left Hand. A sofa in the middle of the stage. A table with an open letter upon it, on the left of the sofa. Time: Evening.

Angèle *(reclining upon the sofa)*

At length the dread moment is arrived! The Marquis returns to-night! But how shall I dare meet him—receive his kind kiss upon my polluted lips—hear his protestations of renewed affection—and yet know that I have deceived him? The good old man, who raised me from a humble [station][5]—from a mere village girl—to the patron of his wealth and fortune! Oh! I am very guilty—a thousand times were criminal, on account of the deep debt of gratitude I owe my husband! And he was so happy in my society—the fond, the venerable old man—that I must have been worse than the nicest demon to have proved faithless to one who had so many claims upon my affection!

[*Weeps.*

But it was a species of fascination which led me astray. For the first three months after my husband's departure to the English Court, I thought of nought but him. I devoured his letters with avidity; and my only solace was writing to the Marquis in return. But at length St. Aubyn came; he fascinated me—he cast his spells around me—and I fell! The letters of the Marquis then no longer gave me pleasure and I hurried even my letters to him. Yes—St. Aubyn, the young priest—with his dark hazel eyes, his eagle glance, his soft and penetrating voice, and his fascinating manners—St Aubyn came; and from the moment we first met my doom was sealed. Oh! Fatal combination of circumstances! The marquis despatches his nephew, the Count Lagrace,[6] on urgent business to Paris; and charges him with a letter for me. That letter is also to be the medium of introduction between us. I had heard much of the Count Lagrace, and longed to become acquainted with my husband's relative. At length a stranger is announced to me; and Saint Aubyn—a priest—comes instead of the Count Lagrace—a soldier! Oh! Fortune had determined to work my ruin! The count's carriage had broken down some leagues from Paris; he himself was seriously hurt; and sent his friend Saint Aubyn on to Paris, with his letters and despatches. It was thus I became acquainted with Saint Aubyn: Oh! Would to God I had never seen him!

[*Weeps again.*

After a year of marriage, to be afraid to meet my husband returning from an absence of many months! Oh! retrospection over the past is terrible; and the future——I dare not glance at that!

[Enter Annette. R[ight] *H*[and]

Ah! Annette! Is the Marquis arrived? Has he at length returned? Oh! Annette!

[Angèle *rises*

Annette.

His Lordship is not yet arrived. But pray calm yourself, my lady; and give not too violent a [turn][7] to your joy. Extremes of happiness are as bad as extremes of misery, they say; and although it is very natural to be agitated and anxious on such an occasion, your ladyship's health might suffer.

---

[5] The word is illegible here but the context might suggest that it is 'station' (or an equivalent word).

[6] Could be either "Lagrace" or "Lagrase." I have opted for Lagrace.

[7] The word is illegible as the ink runs through it but looks a little bit like "turn."

Angèle (*aside*.)
Alas! How does she misconstrue my emotions!

Annette.
The Abbé Saint Aubyn wants to pay his respects to your Ladyship.

Angèle.
Admit him.

[*Exit Annette*. *R*[ight] *H*[and]
Ah! How my heart beats! Perhaps this is the last time Saint Aubyn and I shall ever meet again; for I could not encounter his weaponised glances in the presence of my husband. Oh! no—one of those looks, which first [seduced][8] me and made me what I am, would call to my cheek the deep red blushes that would betray my secret! Alas! He little knows the sad tidings that await him!

[*Enter Annette and St. Aubyn*, *R*[ight] *H*[and]
Annette, you may retire.

[*Exit Annette*, *R*[ight] *H*[and]

Saint Aubyn.
Angèle—dear Angèle!

[*They embrace*.
Ah! if you only knew how rejoiced I am to pass an hour with you, Angèle, you would not refuse me the pleasure of more frequent interviews! I am aware that prudence has been your motive: but, alas! Prudence is not known by those who love like me!

Angèle.
And do you doubt my love, Saint Aubyn? Have I not sacrificed all for you? Peace, honour, tranquillity—all swallowed up in the whirpool of my passion! O Saint Aubyn, do not doubt my love!

Saint Aubyn.
Pardon me, Angèle—pardon me—I was wrong! But you know that true love is jealous and suspicious; and that absence engenders a thousand strange ideas which the imagination seeks in vain to repress. You weep, Angèle—you weep! Is it my folly that has distressed you?

[*He takes her hand*.

Angèle.
You distress me! Oh! No—Saint Aubyn; for you are now my only consolation. But our dream of happiness is over!

Saint Aubyn.
Angèle, what mean you? Speak—Leave us not in suspense!

Angèle.
The Marquis returns to-night! In an hour he will be here!

[8] Word is illegible.

Saint Aubyn.
The Marquis returns! Impossible!

Angèle.
Nay, here is the letter which contains the fatal announcement.
[*She takes the letter from the table and hands it to Saint Aubyn*.

Saint Aubyn.
It is but too true!
[*Reads*.
"In three days, dearest Angèle, I shall be with you. Hostilities are announced by the English, and the Emperor has deemed it mandatory to recal[l] me from my diplomatic situation at the English Court. His Imperial Majesty has however announced to me his gracious intention to appoint me Grand Chamberlain; ~~about his own person~~ and the Empress Josephine has nominated you, Angèle, to a high place about her own person. Shortly after my return to Paris, we shall remove to the apartments which will be allotted to us in the palace of the Tuileries."

Angèle.
And this accession of rank and honour comes as if to mock my misery. O Saint Aubyn, we must now bid each other farewell for a long—long time, if not forever!

Saint Aubyn.
Despair not, dearest Angèle; we will still continue to meet in secret. But forget not my caution so frequently repeated;—mention not my name to your husband, as that of a friend of the Count Lagrace. He would be desirous of seeing me, to learn some tidings of his nephew—and I dare not—could not meet him!

Angèle.
Fear nothing on that head. In my letters to the Marquis I have merely informed him that an accident prevented the Count Lagrace from calling upon me, and that the letter, of which he was the bearer, was forwarded by a messenger, whom I did not name.

Saint Aubyn.
And when questioned by the Marquis relative to the Count, Angèle—you must tell him the truth; that you have never heard from Lagrace since the day he first made you aware of the accident he had met with, and that you have never seen him,[9] nor do you know what has become of him.

Angèle.
That indeed is the truth: would to God I had us other questions [sic] to dread than those which relate to the Count! But the Marquis will ask me a thousand others, concerning my amusements during his absence; and he will enquire what visitors I have received; or what new acquaintances I have formed. And thou, Saint Aubyn, I shall cast down my eyes, and blush, and perhaps—weep; for that name which is dearest to me, my tongue dares not utter!

[9] ~~since the day he first made you aware~~

Saint Aubyn.

Indulge not in such gloomy anticipations, Angèle. Compose yourself; and let the recollection of our loves arouse you with courage to meet all enquiries.

Angèle.

When we separate, Saint Aubyn, and when I look anxiously forward to the time of our next meeting, how slowly time passes the weary hour: but now, that the arrival of my husband draws nearer and nearer every moment, how rapidly the fatal instant advances!

Saint Aubyn.

The dread of evil is greater than the evil itself, Angèle; and, believe me, that for the first few days after his return, the Marquis will be too much occupied in giving an account of his diplomatic mission to England, to have any time to pass with you. Then, when you are once established at the Palace, you will be more your own mistress than ~~in this house~~ ever you are at present, in this house.

Angèle.

It is kind—exceeding kind of you, Saint Aubyn, to endeavour to console me; but, alas! My mind is agitated with a strange presentiment of evil; and there are moments when I feel, that if you were always near me, I could present a more calm and tranquil appearance in the presence of my husband, whose coming I dread so deeply.

Saint Aubyn.

What mean you, Angèle?

Angèle.

I mean that by virtue of your profession you might be a frequent visitor at this house; and that, in the capacity as [cleric], you might have free ingress and egress as usual.

Saint Aubyn.

You would that I became acquainted with your husband, Angèle?

Angèle

Such was my thought: but if it give you pain, Saint Aubyn, I will banish it forever.

Saint Aubyn.

Yes—banish it, Angèle: erase it from your mind! I would not visit you after your husband's return; I dare not face the man whom I have so grossly injured. Ah! Angèle—if you love me, reiterate not the wish! We will meet in secret—elsewhere; but I cannot—would not—must not encounter the Marquis!

[*He paces the stage with agitated steps*.

Oh! No—no; I would die first!

Angèle.

Pardon me, Saint Aubyn; I meant not to grieve you; and believe me, that there is nothing under the canopy of heaven which I would not do or dare for you. Oh! For one hour of your love would I renounce years of splendour, fortune, and rank! Poverty and wealth with you [are] more preferable to affluence and titles with another.

Saint Aubyn.

But, alas! Angèle—I would not entice you from the house of your husband. As yet our loves are unsuspected; Annette believes that I am your relation, and that my attachment to the fallen dynasty alone compels me to visit you in secret. She will not mention me to your husband—she knows that he is devoted to the imperial cause; and thus our amours are safe! Let us not publish them to the world ourselves, ~~by~~ and court the exposure and the disgrace we both so deeply dread!

[*Enter Annette. R*[ight] *H*[and]

Annette.

The Marquis is arrived, my Lady!

Angèle

The Marquis!

Annette.

He is gone to the Palace to lay his dispatches at the feet of the Emperor, and has sent one of his attendants[10] inform your Ladyship that he will be here in the course of an hour.

Angèle

An hour! You may retire, Annette.

[*Exit Annette. R*[ight] *H*[and]

Saint Aubyn.

An hour, Angèle—one short hour is all we have to pass together. Heaven only knows when we may meet again! Oh! Why did Fortune throw you in the way of de Florville—you, a treasure which I should have so highly prized! But, alas, Angèle, you belong to a world whose brightest ornaments are bound to experience the most sad destinies!

Angèle.

Let us not repine at the distributions of Providence, Saint Aubyn: to dare the vengeance of heaven […][11] at a moment when you have need of all its bounty. For we are very [vulnerable?],[12] Saint Aubyn; and although you rejoice that our guilt is concealed from man, there is One above us who reads our own hearts but too well.

Saint Aubyn.

We must soon part, Angèle; we must separate; and I must leave you to an old man, whose bliss I envy beyond all the heavens of the universe.—But, hark! Methought I heard a step in the passage which communicates with the door of the apartment!

[*Angèle runs to the door, R*[ight] *H*[and]*, and loiters for a moment*.

Yes—it is a step! And—Oh! I know the sound full well! It is the Marquis!

Saint Aubyn.

The Marquis! Adieu, Angèle—Farewell! I must depart!

Angèle.

You forget that you will meet the Marquis in the passage!

---

[10] ~~to announce his arrival in the course of an hour~~

[11] Word are illegible.

[12] Word are illegible.

Saint Aubyn.
I am distracted! Whither can I fly?

Angèle.
Here! Here!
[*She flies to the closet and opens the door, L*[eft] *H*[and]

Saint Aubyn.
There is no alternative!
[*He rushes into the closet, and Angèle closes the door, just as the Marquis de Florville enters, R*[ight] *H*[and]

The Marquis.
My dearest Angèle!

Angèle.
Welcome, dear husband.
[*They embrace*.
I scarcely expected you so soon.

The Marquis.
His Majesty detained me but a moment. I was obliged to present myself to him on my arrival—even before I embraced my dear Angèle—as the despatches, of which I was the bearer, were important. I imagined that the Emperor would have detained me to question me relative to my diplomatic transactions in England; but His Majesty postponed the enquiry till tomorrow; and to this delay am I indebted for the pleasure of seeing nearly an hour before I had anticipated that delight.

Angèle.
How kind!

The Marquis.
My letter informed you of the gracious intentions of His Majesty towards us—

Angèle.
I congratulate you, My Lord; but as for myself, a life of retirement and peace were far preferable to the splendour of a Court. You raised me from a low estate, but I seek not for higher honours than those which you have bestowed upon me.

The Marquis.
There—there, my dear Angèle: enough of such [modesty], when honours and fortunes, more brilliant than what we already possess, await us. In a few days' time we shall have our own apartment at the Palace, and reside there.

Angèle.
Raised in a country village, I am not fitted for a Court; and I would not, by any awkwardness of mine, compromise the honour of my husband.

The Marquis.

Compromise my honour, Angèle. You yourself are my honour—my life—my joy—my hope! When I was away from you, Angèle, I passed hours in contemplating your portrait,[13] which I carried with me; and your letters were my greatest consolation. And I know that you were equally solicitous on my account; and often—oh! often did I weep when I recollected the happy days we passed together immediately after our marriage. Oh! yes— Angèle, the old man wept; for he loves you— Angèle—not only as a husband and as a lover love; but also as a father adores the child that is at once his joy and pride.

[*Angèle weeps*.

Well, well, Angèle, I am foolish—I am childish, but you should know how much I prize you; and you would then feel that though a younger man might have better suited your tastes, he could not have made you more happy.

Angèle (*hastily*)

Are you not fatigued? Or do you not require refreshment? Let us descend to the apartment where supper is doubtless prepared.

The Marquis

Suffer me, Angèle, to enjoy your society five minutes longer. The domestics do not as yet know that I am arrived. When I found that my presence was not required at the Tuileries till tomorrow, I hastened home by a bye-street, and desired the coachman[14] to follow slow[ly] by. I entered the house by the back door,[15] and came unperceived to your chamber, Angèle; for well did I know that the joy of my faithful dependents on my return would only detain me from the presence of my beloved wife.

Angèle

How can I sufficiently testify my gratitude for all this kindness?

The Marquis

By loving me always as you have done, and as you do now; by attending to my little wants and comforts, and humouring my[16] caprices. I remember, Angèle, when I first saw you! You were gay, and laughing, and sprightly—oh! as gay as the butterflies which you left behind you in your father's garden. You were not wealthy in dower; but the possession of your charms rendered me a thousand times more happy than I should have been had you brought me the riches of Golconda as your marriage portion. You were not of a distinguished family; but your loveliness was worth a hundred mouldering escutcheons. And, oh! I recollect your smiles of gratitude and delight, when the carriage rolled under the archway of this hotel which I desired you throughout to call your own home; and when I led you to the suite of apartments, and bade you consider it as your abode. You went from mirror to mirror—from the China vase filled with sweet flowers, to the urns exhaling perfumes—and from one curiosity to another, till you were literally fatigued before your interest had subsided.

Angèle

Oh! I was a gay and giddy girl when we first married: but—I am altered <u>now</u>!

---

[13] ~~picture~~
[14] ~~my coachman~~
[15] ~~back entrance~~
[16] ~~little~~

The Marquis

Altered, Angèle! I should be grieved, were you to lose[17] those good spirits which gave you the volatile and happy thing I first loved [in] you. But, tell me—have you heard any news of my hopeful nephew, the Count of Lagrace?

Angèle

I have never seen him.

The Marquis

What! has he not paid his respects to her whom I charged him to be at with every kind of courtesy and distraction?

Angèle

I informed you in my letters of the accident which originally prevented him from being the bearer in person of your packet; and from that instant I have neither seen nor heard of the Count Lagrace.

The Marquis

Ah! I see it all! The mercenary young man was really averse to a match which might rob him of the estate and the name of his uncle! <u>This</u> was the cause of his neglect; and <u>this</u> prompted him to forward his letter by messenger.

Angèle

The same thought has already struck me; and it gave me pain.

The Marquis (*aside*.)

It must be so; especially as I learnt ere now at the Palace that he himself had some dispatches with which I charged him and that he had delivered them in person. But I will not agitate Angèle with my conviction of the Count's hostility to the match!

Angèle

You are thoughtful, my Lord?

The Marquis

No, Angèle: I was merely pondering on the conduct of my nephew. I dare say I shall soon see him now that I am returned to Paris. The boy will think of his promotion; and my interest alone can obtain it. But, hark! I thought I heard a noise!

[*Glances towards the closet*.

Angèle

Oh! No—there was no noise: it was nothing, I can assure you; believe me, it was nothing!

[*She is quietly agitated*.

The Marquis

I was mistaken. Now then, let us hasten to[18] the supper room, and let me assure my faithful servants of my health and safe return. Poor fellows! They shall drink an extra cup of wine tonight, to welcome their lord's arrival!

---

[17] ~~anything~~

[18] ~~the dining room~~

[*Noise is heard in the closet*.

There, Angèle—I was convinced that I heard something: perhaps that silly girl Annette has thought proper to listen to our discourse.

Angèle

How can you think so? Annette is discretion and prudence itself!

The Marquis

Nay, I could swear I heard a noise in this room; and what is more, methought that the door of yonder closet moved just now.

Angèle

Impossible!

The Marquis

My dear Angèle, you must have been dozing previous to my arrival: for I am certain that there is someone there!

Angèle

I was awake, and assure you that you are mistaken.

The Marquis

Angèle, this obstinacy is foolish. Think you that I shall be angry if you and the silly Annette choose to dissipate an hour in idle chatter? No—no! I am aware what women are, and can make allowances for their weaknesses, amongst which gossiping is the most venial.

Angèle

Upon my honour, my Lord—as I live—nay, hear me—I swear—

The Marquis

What, Angèle?

Angèle

That there is no one in that closet! Stay—will you have me ring the bell, and Annette shall answer it?

The Marquis

Were you any other than Angèle de Florville, I should say that your obstinacy was sufficient to make a suspicion in my mind.

Angèle

Oh! believe me, there is no one there!

The Marquis

Whence this agitation, then? Angèle, it is a duty I owe to myself and to you, to penetrate this mystery!

Angèle

You suspect me! My Lord—remember that if you find no one there, everything is at an end between you and me!

The Marquis

What! is this the mild and gentle Angèle?

[*He advances towards the closet*.

Madam, your conduct is most strange!

Angèle

Stay, oh! stay! I swear to you that there is no one there!

[*She rushes forward to restrain the Marquis*.

The Marquis

Release me, my dear: I am decided! And if you have deceived me, may heaven pardon you!

[*He flings open the door of the closet.*
Saint Aubyn rushes out with a dagger in his hand.

Ah! what do I see? Oh! horror! horror!

Saint Aubyn

There is no alternative!

[*He stabs the Marquis, who staggers and falls dead at his feet*.

Angèle

O God! my husband!

[*She falls upon the sofa and faints.*
Saint Aubyn stands horror-struck over the dead body.
The curtain falls slowly.

END OF ACT I.

Figure 1: G. Phillips, ‘Saint Aubyn’. Illustration from G.W.M. Reynolds’s *Pickwick Abroad; or, The Tour in France* (1839)

Act II.

Scene I.

The stage represents an apartment in the Palace of Tuileries. Entrance doors in the centre; a trap door in the floor of the stage.
Time: afternoon.

Angèle

Three months have pas[sed][19] away since that fatal night; and Saint Aubyn has not sought to see me! Not a letter—not a word—to intimate where he is, or whether he still loves me! And, oh God! what a night that was! The kind—the good old man, who had raised me to a high and envied position—who was never wearied of heaping benefits upon my head—the tender husband—the more than father—who that night returned to give me the joyful tidings of fresh honours awaiting her whom he loved—he—that kind old man—was a murdered corpse at my feet! We tore up the board of the closet—we buried him underneath; and the head of my couch touched the very partition which separated my chamber from the closet that formed his tomb! The stains of his blood were scarcely dry beneath my feet! Perchance the convulsions of his limbs had not ceased, when I returned to my bed—but not to sleep! Oh! a guilty conscience is terrible; and the murder of a husband is a curse which tears of blood cannot [absolve]![20] The deed is written with a pen of ink dipped in the gore of the slain, in the register of the Eternal; and hell sweeps for its destined prey!

[*Enter Annette, C*[entre]

Annette

My Lady, Her Majesty, the Empress!

[*Enter Josephine, attended by Lords and Ladies. Josephine sits down; the rest stand. Exit Annette.*

Angèle

Your Majesty is too kind, thus to honour me with your imperial presence.

Josephine

Were we not to come for you, child, you would die of grief; and it was a lucky thought which prompted me to summons you to our presence immediately after the mysterious disappearance of your husband.

Angèle

Your Majesty's laments are deeply impressed upon my memory.

Josephine

Nay: but as you would not favour us with your sweet society in our own apartments, we[21] were forced to visit you in your's. We have [most][22] important news to tell you, fair Angèle. The Count Lagrace has at length made his appearance at Court.

---

[19] Reynolds writes 'past'.
[20] Word is illegible.
[21] Reynolds writes 'we' twice here.
[22] Word is illegible.

Angèle
The Count Lagrace!

Josephine
Yes; and he has sworn not to rest until he shall have discovered the murderer of his uncle.

Angèle
The murderer!

Josephine
Alas! Is it not but natural to suppose that the unfortunate Marquis, when he left the Palace on the night of his arrival from London, strayed into some bye street, and fell a victim to midnight assassins[?] A sentry at the gates saw him pass out [from][23] the Rue de Rivoli to the Place de Carrousel; and from that moment all traces of the venerable noble were lost.

Angèle
Alas! It is but too true!

Josephine
And as he never returned to his own home—was never seen by you or his dependants—it is but too probable that he was murdered. The young Count is resolved to investigate the mystery; and we hope most sincerely that his endeavours will at length bring the villains to condign punishment!

Angèle
The murderers?

Josephine
Aye—certainly, child! And then your thirst of vengeance will at least be gratified. The Count has shut up the house in which you and the Marquis resided; and report says that he does not intend to occupy it.

Angèle (*aside*.)
Ah! then my secret is safe as yet!

Josephine
The Emperor, having found that all enquiries concerning the fate of the Marquis are useless has ordained that if within a year from the period of your husband's disappearance, he be not forthcoming, in that case the Count Lagrace shall be inducted into the possession of the title and estates. A large income is reverted to you; and in the meantime, the management of the property is conferred upon the Count.

Angèle
His Majesty's pleasure commands my most implicit obedience.

[23] Reynolds writes 'with'.

Josphine

It is to be sincerely hoped that the Count Legrace will succeed in elucidating the hideous mystery which hangs around the fate of your husband. How grateful and anxious must you be, when you know that he is using the utmost exertions to that purpose!

Angèle

Anxious! Oh! indeed I am! Your Majesty knows not the anxiety—the suspense in which I exist!

Josephine

I can well fancy it! A kind husband such as you possessed, Angèle, is deeply to be deplored; and the uncertainty—

Angèle (*aside*.)

Uncertainty!

Josephine

The uncertainty, which enshrouds his doom, naturally sharpens the edge of your grief.

Angèle

My grief! Your Majesty cannot doubt the extent of my grief?

Josephine

On the contrary, we fully appreciate it, and live for the purpose of solacing it.

Angèle

My grief, Your Majesty, is too deeply seated to be remediated by human aid; and while I most sincerely thank you or the kindness which prompts this visit, I feel, alas! that its charitable object has failed. It is however a consolation to know that your Majesty sympathises in the sorrows of your subjects; and a blessed thing were it for the world, if other sovereigns only followed so great and brilliant an example! But, alas! those who are placed at the head of nations, know too little of their people's woes; and thus are the poor and suffering[24] often deprived of succour and assistance!

Josephine

You flatter us for a trivial act of common Christian charity. Adieu, Angèle, we will shortly visit you again.

[*Angèle kisses the hand of Josephine, who rises, and exit*[s]*, followed by Lords and Ladies, C*[entre]

Angèle

The Count Lagrace is in search of the murderers of his uncle—of my husband! But his efforts will not—cannot be crowned with success! Oh! No—he must not detect us! Our plans were too well conceived—too carefully managed to leave scope for detection! And thou, Providence, naturally seems to favour us still! The count closes the mansion—he will not inhabit it! This is something more than the result of mere chance!

[*Enter Annette, C*[entre]

What now, Annette? More visitors?

[24] Reynolds crosses out a word here, but that is rendered illegible.

Annette
Yes, My Lady; one whom your Ladyship will doubtless be surprised to see.

Angèle
Who is he, Annette?

Annette
The Abbé Saint Aubyn!

Angèle
The Abbé Saint Aubyn?

Annette
He waits in the antechamber below.

Angèle
Desire him to walk up.

[*Exit Annette, C*[entre]

Saint Aubyn come at last! And can I see him without repugnance? Will not restraint and embarrassment stop the wings of love? Will my lips be pressed by a murderer? And, on his part, will he not appreciate the dearness of the sacrifice with which his privileges have been obtained? Oh! No–the fear of danger and detection has past, and the feelings of horror must resume their empire. Let me once more cast my eyes on him who I have so deeply—so tenderly—and so passionately loved!

[*Enter Saint Aubyn, C*[entre]

Saint Aubyn
At length, dearest Angèle, we meet again!

Angèle
And our separation has been long and tedious—attend to me.

[*They embrace*

Saint Aubyn
And can you believe that my feelings were at variance with yours? Oh! no—Angèle—my love admits not of suspicion or mistrust!

Angèle
The Count Lagrace is in Paris!

Saint Aubyn
I know it. But no human form, Angèle, can detect our crime. The quicklime which I placed round the body, has long ago destroyed it; and even were the boards of the fatal closet removed, a skeleton only would be discovered![25]

[25] Reynolds here crosses out many words, but they are written over with 'a skeleton only' and are illegible.

Angèle

Oh! talk not of the horrid dead! Rather let us essay to banish it forever from our memories. But, alas! that hope is vain and futile: for my memory is immortal!

Saint Aubyn

What, Angèle! Will you show less firmness now than you did on that fatal night? So soon as I recovered you from the fit into which you had fallen, I reasoned with you—I brought you to the calm, or veritable ruin—exposure—disgrace—and an ignominious fate, would have been our destiny! Then, in that hour of horror and alarm—in the pressure of that scene of slaughter and of blood, did you exhibit a species of superhuman firmness, which the desperate [emergency][26] of the case could alone have originated.

Angèle

Say, rather, my love for you, Saint Aubyn, gave me that desperate courage!

Saint Aubyn

We worked with a perseverance and an assiduity worthy of a better cause; and when the grey dawn of morning peeked in at the armchair, our task was accomplished!

Angèle

But wherefore recapitulate the horrors of that night? They are too deeply ingraven on my memory ever to be obliterated.

Saint Aubyn

Let us then avoid the subject! Three months have elapsed since last we met; and believe me, Angèle, that often—very often—have I longed to see you. But circumstances, which I could not control, prevented me. You are greatly altered, Angèle!

Angèle

And your countenance is thin and pale. Methinks, also, that your appearance has undergone a considerable[27] change.

Saint Aubyn

It is my attire, perhaps, which you notice.

Angèle (*staring*.)

Ah! you no longer wear the garb of a priest!

Saint Aubyn

Because, Angèle, I am a priest no more!

Angèle

Heavens! Can I believe my ears? You are a priest no longer? The avowal is a little balm to a grievous wound!

[26] Word is illegible.

[27] ~~great~~

Saint Aubyn

Oh! no— Angèle—that may never be! I read your thoughts but too well; and would to God that all bar to our union were so easily laid aside. My mind had then been committed to some purpose!

Angèle

Is every hope then lost?

Saint Aubyn

Seek not to fathom this mystery. You will know the truth ere long, and it had better come from other lips than mine!

Angèle

Speak, Saint Aubyn, speak! What means the mystery to which you allude?

Saint Aubyn

Angèle, my love for you has engendered a thousand crimes—a million deceits! But I am proud of all I have undergone—and all I have done for you, Angèle—for you are worthy of my love!

Angèle

Then, if you still love me, Saint Aubyn, leave me not in doubt. Why—twice you have guessed my thoughts—cannot we proclaim an affection to the world?

Saint Aubyn

Because marriage would excite the astonishment of the world; and astonishment would lead to enquiry; because such enquiry would at length conduct the myrmidons of justice to the very spot where all evidence of our crime was concealed: because, Angèle, our union now would be almost an acknowledgment of our former illicit loves; because your fame and my reputation are as yet spotless and pure; but the wealth of calumny would destroy them; and because, in [truth], I am[28] your relative by marriage—Angèle—I am the Count Lagrace, the nephew of the late Marquis of Florville!

Angèle

Ah! a light breaks in upon me! I understand it all.

Saint Aubyn

Yes—Saint Aubyn and the Count Lagrace are one and the same person. Lured, dazzled, intoxicated by the fame of your beauty, I was already deeply enamoured of you before my arrival in Paris. But full well had the same rumour, which first published an account of your attractions, also inculcated the history of your virtue and unconquerable fidelity to the old man who praised you so highly. Had I presented myself to you as the Count Lagrace—the nephew of your husband—we should have both been guiltier now; but I burned to possess you—I coveted love as the most enviable of earthly[29] treasures—and I resolved that, if the price was my immortal soul, I would gratify my wishes. I succeeded—I fascinated you—I astonished you by the singularity of my manners: and now, instead of

[28] ~~The Count Lagrace~~

[29] ~~mortal~~

a triumphant conqueror, behold me, still—Angèle—a submissive and willing slave at your feet!

[*He kneels. Angèle appears to reflect deeply*.

Angèle
So you still consider[30] yourself my slave?

Saint Aubyn
By heaven, I do!

Angèle
And you will obey my slightest wish?

Saint Aubyn
As God is my judge!

Angèle
Swear!

Saint Aubyn
I swear!

Angèle
Then rise, and listen.

[*He rises*.

Saint Aubyn
Speak!

Angèle
Ask not my motives for the strange request I am about to make you. Call my wish a whim—a phantasy—or what you will, so long as you gratify it.

Saint Aubyn
I have sworn!

Angèle
Tonight, as the clock strike eleven, you must meet in a place where I can unburthen my mind to you, free of all interruption. I have much to tell, you much to hear.

Saint Aubyn
And the place of rendez-vous?

Angèle
Start not! It is the Catacombs!

Saint Aubyn
The Catacombs! O Angèle!

---

[30] ~~you~~

Angèle
You have sworn!

Saint Aubyn
Enough! Proceed!

Angèle
You will seek the Catacombs by the further entrance in the Rue d'Enfers: my means of communication are within my reach.

[She stoops down and raises the trap door.

This is the secret entrance to the Catacombs, which the servants of France reserve as a safe egress from this palace; and it is by this staircase that I shall hasten to my appointment tonight.

Saint Aubyn
Angèle!

Angèle
You have sworn!

Saint Aubyn
'Tis true! You shall be obeyed, singular and unaccountable as is your request. In what spot do we meet?

Angèle
You know that the tombs in the Catacombs are heaped up in solid piles to correspond with the disposition of the houses of the city above; and the various walks and avenues in that wilderness of skulls, tally with the living town whose former denizens have found a cemetery <u>there</u>!

Saint Aubyn
I know that such is the arrangement of the Catacombs.

Angèle
Then meet me in the vacant spot beneath the open space in front of the College of Four Nations.

[*She closes the trap door.*

Saint Aubyn
I will be punctual. Till then farewell.

Angèle
Farewell! Eleven is the hour; and remember, that you have sworn!

Saint Aubyn
Fear not: my vow is saved.

[Exit Saint Aubyn, C[entre]

Angèle

Vengeance! Vengeance! I will yet be avenged! In the meantime, let me seek an hour's repose!

[*Exit Angèle, C*[entre]

Scene III.

The stage represents the Catacombs of Paris. Two or three pillars support the roof. A heap of stones and earth in the middle of the stage. Skulls and bones lying about.
Time: night.
The stage is dark.

[*Enter Angèle (with a lamp,) R*[ight] *H*[and]

Angèle

How cold and silent is this Kingdom of death! I hear my heart beating with unusual violence! Is it that my courage fails me? Oh! no! And yet what am I? A lone woman in the catacombs—in the subterranean realms which form the sepulchres for relics of millions of individuals—in the presence of hideous skeletons—surrounded by myriads of fleshless bones—far beneath the reach of succour in case of danger—with crimes of the blackest dye weighing heavily upon my mind—the reminiscence of my infidelity to a kind husband before—and the phantom of the murdered Marquis behind—here—in this tombstone tenement of Death, I stand—the once envied Angèle de Florville!

[*She gazes wildly around.*

But, oh! I am no longer a fit subject for jealousy and envy *here*! I move amidst his [infernal][31] charnel house like the ghost of one of its denizens! Skeletons are on my right—skeletons are on my left, bones are over my head; and I trip on skulls as I walk along!

[*She advances a few steps.*

Oh! it is enough to turn my brain—to drive me mad—rash, daring woman that I am! Avaunt, ye terrible ideas that haunt me! Let not my imagination wander, for already has it almost vested one of those hideous skeletons with flesh, and placed a tongue between the lips, and given words to that tongue,—and the words were, "Perjured and faithless wife!" and "accursed murderer of a kind and generous-hearted old man!"

[*She places the lamp upon the ground.*
Enter Saint Aubyn (with a torch.) L[eft] *H*[and].

Ah! here is he whom I anxiously wait for!

Saint Aubyn

Angèle, and have you really ventured here then, and at such an hour?

Angèle

Thank heaven! You have not disappointed me! Your oath has been faithfully kept!

Saint Aubyn

What means this strange freak, Angèle? Dread[32] fears and suspicions have found a ready entrance into my mind! Do you know that hundreds of people have lost their way in this horrid subterraneous City of Death, and have perished of starvation?

---

[31] Word is illegible.
[32] ~~Strange~~

Angèle

Extinguish your torch! My lamp will not keep a-light above an hour, and our conference will be a long one. We shall require <u>that</u> torch shortly.

[*She snatches the torch from his hand, throws it on the ground, and extinguishes it with her foot*.

Now let us find a spot where we may rest ourselves and converse at our leisure. Ah! here is a convenient seat!

[*She sits down upon the heap of stones and forces Saint Aubyn to seat himself beside her*.

Saint Aubyn

O Angèle! Let us quit this terrible place!

Angèle

Now, noble Count Lagrace, we will first converse in peace together. Doubtless you guess not the motives of this strange interview?

Saint Aubyn

No! for God's sake explain them! I have been in battle, and may say that none ever dared impeach my bravery[33] on the field of carnage: but I frankly acknowledge, Angèle, that I tremble in the cemetery of Death!

Angèle

Ha! Ha! 'tis a singular idea! It was but a few hours[34] ago that you confessed the foul deceit you had practised upon me. <u>You</u> yourself acknowledged, with your own lips, that had you not assumed the guise of priest, we should yet have been virtuous; and I swear to you that your surmises are just! But now the hypocrite and the deceiver is <u>himself</u> deceived! Think [you],[35] Count Lagrace—Saint Aubyn—Marquis of Florville in waiting—you are a villain—you made me what I am—a wretch who was faithless to her marriage vow, and who witnessed the murder of her husband by her vile paramour! You ruined me—you destroyed my peace of mind—you robbed me of my honour and my tranquillity—you have rendered me unfit to live—and you shall die with me!

Saint Aubyn

Angèle! Angèle! 'tis thus that I implore your mercy!

[*He kneels*.

Your beauty—my love—my passion—were the fatal causes of all my [schemes], and all my villainy! Consider how faithfully I have loved you, Angèle, and oh! pardon the faults of which I have been guilty!

Angèle

Nay, implore not the mercy of me: it is not in my power to grant it. I have sworn a sacred vow—that vow is registered in heaven—and I dare not break it! But hear me out. The veil of fascination fell from my eyes but this afternoon, when I found out that Saint Aubyn, whom I had loved, was the Count Lagrace who had sought my presence with the

---

[33] ~~courage~~

[34] ~~Yesterday morning~~

[35] Reynolds writes 'ye', but the context, of a one to one conversation, does not require the plural form of thou.

premeditated plan of my seduction ripe in his mind! Oh! 'twas then that I saw thee, Lagrace, in thy true colours—and I suddenly hated as much as I had ever loved thee!

[*She rises*.

Saint Aubyn
Oh! say not so!

Angèle
And now you know your fate! Starvation—a lingering, terrible death—a death by inches—an existence of a few days, of which each moment is a year, and each hour a century—a death in darkness, in cold, and amidst a thousand hideous objects—a death in the realms of Death—this is thy portion!

Saint Aubyn
O horror! horror!

[*He rises*.

Angèle
Yes—this is thy portion! You shared my joy and my pleasure; and now you shall be the partner of my atonement!

Saint Aubyn
O Angèle! we cannot due thus! we must not die so young!

Angèle
Life has no more attractions for me!

Saint Aubyn
But for me! Title—youth—fortune—the smiles of the greatest monarch in the universe—must all these be sacrificed?

Angèle
All! all!

Saint Aubyn
Angèle! you cannot force me to become your partner in this terrible doom!

Angèle
Your oath!

Saint Aubyn
I will violate it! Oh! yes—I would violate a thousand oaths, sooner than die so terrible a death! I care not for my oath! Life is preferable to [dying][36]—and now I renounce the promise I made you!

Angèle
Wretch! You would add perjury to your crimes?

[36] Word is illegible.

Saint Aubyn

Oh! were hell yearning for me, would I yield up all future hopes of salvation, for a few years of life in this world! I ask but for a few years—a few years to repent—and thou may die in peace! But now—oh! no—I cannot, dare not meet Death!

Angèle

Coward! would you be outdone by a woman?

Saint Aubyn

Reproach—invective—remonstrance—all are vain! I will not stay to die in this hideous charnel house! We have a light—I can yet retrace my steps to the entrance—

Angèle

Banish all hope!

[*She extinguishes the lamp*.

Your fate is now inevitable!

Saint Aubyn

Oh! Oh!

[*He throws himself upon the ground*.

Angèle

I am now avenged!

[*Curtain descends slowly*.

END